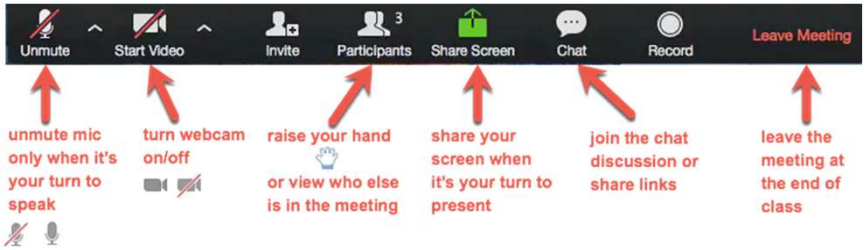
Area 30 Open Forum:
Reopening Our Meetings

WELCOME!

THE MEETING WILL START SHORTLY



Meeting Tools: Use Participant controls via icons in lower left corner of the Zoom screen

- Mute/Unmute your microphone (far left)
- Turn on/off camera. ("Start/Stop Video")
- View Participant list - opens pop-out screen that includes a "Raise Hand" icon that you may use to raise a virtual hand
- Anonymize your name in the participant list and video. Suggested: First name, last initial, home group/district
- On your Zoom screen, you will also see a choice to toggle between Speaker ()active speaker) and *Gallery View (*all participants)

Open Forum Overview

Format

- Opening
- Introductions
- Spiritual Basis for Forum
- Rationale for Discussion
- Open Forum—2 parts
  - AA Members
  - AA Groups
- Closing

Structure

- Hosts will mute and unmute
- All are invited to share
- If you have spoken once, please allow others a voice before raising hand to speak again
- In the interest of hearing as many differing concerns as possible, please refrain from restating what has already been said, and have faith that the point has been made
- The raise hand feature will be used for sharing
- If you are a phone user, press *9 to raise your hand

Spiritual Basis for our Open Forum

This forum is a safe space to share your concerns as well as your experience, strength, and hope among your fellow AA members

The topic of closing and reopening meetings may be difficult to discuss for many

Presume goodwill even when there are differences of opinion

Remember each AA group's primary purpose—to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers

12 Traditions form the basis of this open forum

Acknowledgements

Area 30 thanks the following for allowing us to leverage their experience, strength, and hope into this open forum and documents:

- Area 30 Districts 15/16
- Area 48 ad hoc committee, and
- Area 30 Delegate

MAJOR thank you to:

- Brendan, Mike, Arisa, and Ric for their technological support
- Catherine and Johanna for taking notes, and
- YOU for attending!

The 12 Traditions

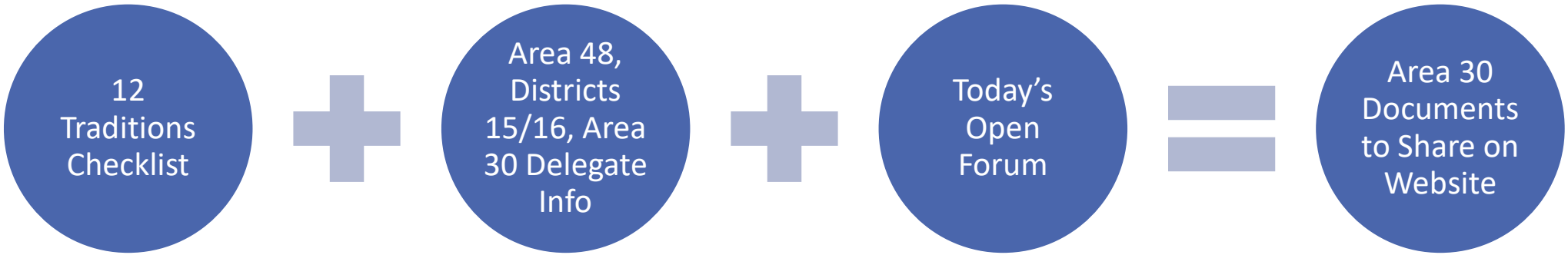
1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.

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3. The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.
6. An A.A. group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. A.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the A.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

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How Can Area 30 Help Members and Groups in Reopening Meetings?



Points to Consider for AA Members on Reopening



For AA Members: Points to Consider on Reopening our Meetings

Using the 12 Traditions as Our Guide

Each AA member may consider reopening differently. Here are some topics we may want to think about reopening after the quarantine. For additional resources, see the Area 30 website at: https://aoemass.org/area30/.

In the spirit of the Traditions Checklist from the AA Grapevine, here are some questions for the individual to contemplate when considering the topic of reopening our meetings:

Tradition One: Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon AA unity.

1. Keeping in mind that I am a small part of a great whole (long form) am I willing to support to my group's decision to discontinue virtual meetings and return to in-person meetings? Or, to continue virtual meetings and delay returning to in-person meetings?

Tradition Two: For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.

1. Am I listening to an individual because they are the most outspoken and not necessarily the most well informed?
2. Am I participating in my group's discussion on this topic, and sharing my experience?
3. In discussions with my group concerning reopening, am I contributing sound information or succumbing to emotionalism?
4. Do I understand what an "informed group conscience" is?
5. Am I able to support our group conscience if the majority opinion differs from mine?

Tradition Three: The only requirement for AA membership is a desire to stop drinking.

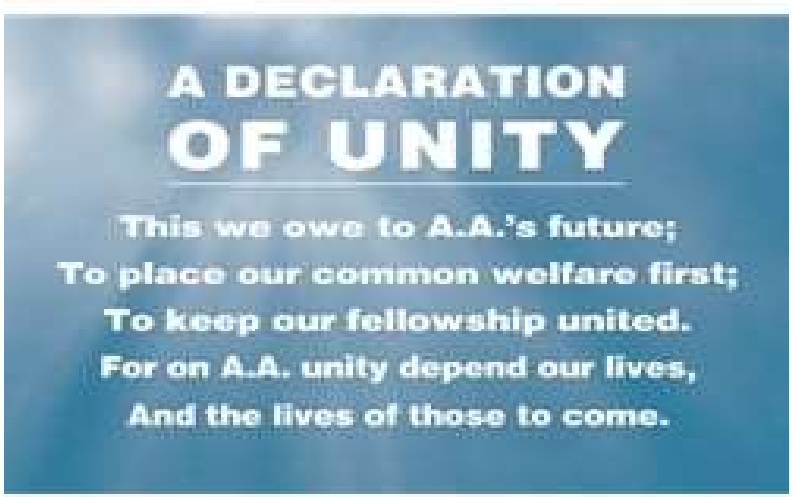
1. In my mind, do I think governmental regulations and guidelines don't apply to AA?
2. Am I willing to respect current requirements for attendance, such as wearing a mask or face covering?
3. Knowing we may refuse none who wish to recover, am I willing to surrender my seat to the newcomer if we exceed capacity in our hall?

Tradition Four: Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or AA as a whole.

1. Am I helping my group take into consideration concerns specific to our hall… neighbors, other tenants?
2. Does my attendance at in-person meetings potentially affect AA as a whole?
3. Do I understand that my lack of willingness to respect our landlord's guidelines for usage may affect other groups which also meet here?

Open Forum Question: What do you think is important for AA members to consider about reopening our meetings?

Points to Consider for AA Groups on Reopening



For AA Groups: Points to Consider on Reopening our Meetings

Using the 12 Traditions as Our Guide

Each AA member may consider reopening differently. Here are some topics we may want to think about reopening after the quarantine. For additional resources, see the Area 30 website at: https://aoemass.org/area30/.

Topics for Discussion as You Plan for Reopening

Each group may approach reopening differently. Here are some topics groups may want to discuss prior to reopening.

- **Our Group Conscience**
  - Have we, as a group, discussed ways to consider all the issues faced by our group in order to reopen?
  - Have we agreed on how to reach group conscience, such as open sharing opportunities as well as voting?
  - For voting, do we want to use "majority rule" or the AA principle of "substantial unanimity," where we don't move forward with a change unless we are substantially all in agreement?
  - How can our group balance autonomy while not adversely affecting AA as a whole?
  - What about those unable to meet by Zoom—how are we including them in our group conscience decisions?
  - How can we, as a group, place principles before personalities? Doing "the right thing" is sometimes open to interpretation. How can we ensure voices are heard without arguing over outside issues?
  - Have we provided enough time before a voting meeting to announce what will be voted on, as well as adequate time for those who want to discuss the topic?
- **Landlord and/or Facility**
  - Is the facility ready for our meeting to return? Having a key does not necessarily mean meetings can resume!
  - Did we ask the facility about the safety procedures they want our group to follow (sanitizing, masks, etc.)?
- **Literature**
  - We often pass books around the meeting. Should we consider ways to reduce passing items along? For example, "bring your own book," or one person reading, or a new service position for book handling.
  - If we do make changes, do we update the meeting format?
  - Should we disinfect shared literature before / after the meeting?
  - Should we put a 72-hour quarantine on lending literature like the Grapevine / La Viña?
- **Newcomers**
  - Do we want to give a handout to newcomers that explains how things are different from "normal" meetings?
  - Do we want to have handouts prepared with safety in mind, such as creating a plastic baggie with items for a newcomer like the group contact list, 7th Tradition information, literature, pamphlets?
- **Anniversaries and Chips**
  - We often celebrate lengths of sobriety with chips, medallions, cards, or cakes. Do we need to consider a different approach to handle coins, cake, cards and pens, etc.?
- **Finances**
  - Some of the items that the group determines to be necessary for reopening may require money (for example, the purchase of cleaning products or hand sanitizer). Is our treasurer involved? Did we confirm we have enough money to buy items to support reopening before setting a reopen date?
  - For the 7th Tradition, do we need to change how we handle money, such as putting the basket in the middle of the room or one group member carrying the basket around the room?
  - Do we have a digital options for contributing to the 7th Tradition or do we want to create one? Did we know

Open Forum Question: What do you think is important for AA groups to consider about reopening our meetings?

In Closing….

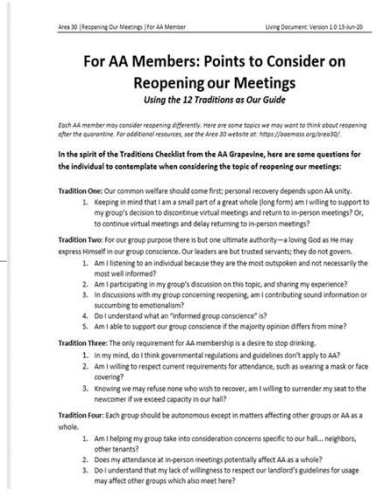
Poll questions

Thank you all for participating in this open forum

Living documents will be available at the Area 30 website: https://aaemass.org

Suggestions? serviceseminar@aaemass.org **or** accessibilities@aaemass.org

Close with the **Serenity Prayer**



Area 30 | Reopening Our Meetings | For AA Member — Living Document: Version 1.0 13-Jun-20

For AA Members: Points to Consider on Reopening our Meetings

Using the 12 Traditions as Our Guide

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Tradition One: Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon AA unity.

1. Keeping in mind that I am a small part of a great whole (long form) am I willing to support to my group's decision to discontinue virtual meetings and return to in-person meetings? Or, to continue virtual meetings and delay returning to in-person meetings?

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Area 30 | Reopening Our Meetings | Resources — Living Document: Version 1.0 13-Jun-20

Reopening our Meetings: Resources to Support Discussion

Using the 12 Traditions as Our Guide

Each AA member and AA group may consider reopening differently. This document provides some resources to help us think about reopening after the quarantine. For additional resources, see the Area 30 website at: https://aaemass.org/area30/.

An Informed A.A. Group Conscience

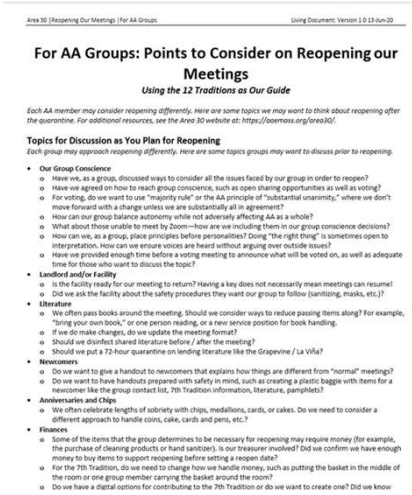
The group conscience is the collective conscience of the group membership and thus represents substantial unanimity on an issue before definitive action is taken. This is achieved by the group members through the sharing of full information, individual points of view, and the practice of A.A. principles. To be fully informed requires a willingness to listen to minority opinions with an open mind. On sensitive issues, the group works slowly — discouraging formal motions until a clear sense of its collective view emerges. Placing principles before 29 personalities, the membership is wary of dominant opinions. Its voice is heard when a well-informed group arrives at a decision. The result rests on more than a "yes" or "no" count — precisely because it is the spiritual expression of the group conscience. The term "informed group conscience" implies that pertinent information has been studied and all views have been heard before the group votes (Source: The AA Group https://www.aa.org/assets/en_US/p-16_theaagroup.pdf).

Safety and Our Common Welfare

Each member of Alcoholics Anonymous is but a small part of a great whole. A.A. must continue to live or most of us will surely die. Hence our common welfare comes first. But individual welfare follows close afterward. —Tradition One (Long Form) It is hoped that our common suffering as alcoholics and our common solution in A.A. will transcend most issues and curtail negative behaviors that could jeopardize the safety of anyone attending an A.A. meeting. Nevertheless, Alcoholics Anonymous is a microcosm of the larger society we exist in. As such, problems found in the outside world can also make their way into the rooms of A.A. For this reason, groups and members discuss the topic of safety — to raise awareness in the Fellowship and to seek through sponsorship, workshops and meetings, to create as safe an environment as possible to carry A.A.'s message of hope and recovery to the still-suffering alcoholic (source: Safety Card for AA Groups https://www.aa.org/assets/en_US/f-211_SafetyCardforAAGroups.pdf).

The Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous (Short Form)

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2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.
6. An A.A. group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest



Area 30 | Reopening Our Meetings | For AA Groups — Living Document: Version 1.0 13-Jun-20

For AA Groups: Points to Consider on Reopening our Meetings

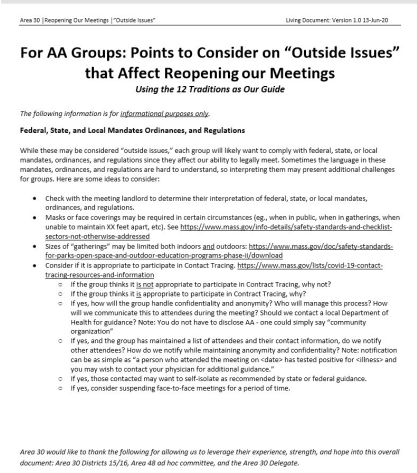
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Area 30 | Reopening Our Meetings | "Outside Issues" — Living Document: Version 1.0 13-Jun-20

For AA Groups: Points to Consider on "Outside Issues" that Affect Reopening our Meetings

Using the 12 Traditions as Our Guide

The following information is for informational purposes only.

Federal, State, and Local Mandates Ordinances, and Regulations

While these may be considered "outside issues," each group will likely want to comply with federal, state, or local mandates, ordinances, and regulations since they affect our ability to legally meet. Sometimes the language in these mandates, ordinances, and regulations are hard to understand, so interpreting them may present additional challenges for groups. Here are some ideas to consider:

- Check with the meeting landlord to determine their interpretation of federal, state, or local mandates, ordinances, and regulations.
- Masks or face coverings may be required in certain circumstances (eg., when in public, when in gatherings, when unable to maintain XX feet apart, etc). See https://www.mass.gov/info-details/safety-standards-and-checklist-sectors-not-otherwise-addressed
- Sizes of "gatherings" may be limited both indoors and outdoors: https://www.mass.gov/doc/safety-standards-for-parks-open-space-and-outdoor-education-programs-phase-ii/download
- Consider if it is appropriate to participate in Contact Tracing. https://www.mass.gov/lists/covid-19-contact-tracing-resources-and-information
  - If the group thinks it is not appropriate to participate in Contract Tracing, why not?
  - If the group thinks it is appropriate to participate in Contract Tracing, why?
  - If yes, how will the group handle confidentiality and anonymity? Who will manage this process? How will we communicate this to attendees during the meeting? Should we contact a local Department of Health for guidance? Note: You do not have to disclose AA - one could simply say "community organization"
  - If yes, and the group has maintained a list of attendees and their contact information, do we notify other attendees? How do we notify while maintaining anonymity and confidentiality? Note: notification can be as simple as "a person who attended the meeting on <date> has tested positive for <illness> and you may wish to contact your physician for additional guidance."
  - If yes, those contacted may want to self-isolate as recommended by state or federal guidance.
  - If yes, consider suspending face-to-face meetings for a period of time.

Area 30 would like to thank the following for allowing us to leverage their experience, strength, and hope into this overall document: Area 30 Districts 15/16, Area 48 ad hoc committee, and the Area 30 Delegate.